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ATTEMPTS TO SEPARATE THE WEST FROM THE AMERICAN UNION.

RT. REV. C. F. ROBERTSON, D.D., LL.D.

Missouri

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MAP OF THE SOUTHWESTERN COUNTRY.

NOTE.

Below are given the editions of the works referred to in the following paper:

History of the United States, by George Bancroft. 10 vols. Boston, 1856-'75.

History of the Formation of the Constitution of the United States, by George Bancroft. 2 vols. New York, 1882.

American State Papers. 38 vols. Washington, 1832.

Secret Journals of the Acts and Proceedings of Congress. 4 vols. Boston, 1821.

Writings of Washington, by Jared Sparks. 12 vols. Boston, 1837.

Works of Benjamin Franklin, by Jared Sparks. 10 vols. Boston, 1840.

Works of John Adams, edited by Chas. F. Adams. 10 vols. Boston, 1853.

Writings of Thomas Jefferson, edited by H. A. Washington. 9 vols. Washington, 1853.

Letters and Other Writings of James Madison. 4 vols. Philadelphia, 1867.

Lives and Times of the Chief Justices, by Henry Flanders. Philadelphia, 1855.

Memoire Historique et Politique sur la Louisiane, par M. de Vergennes. Paris, 1802.

History of Louisiana, by F. X. Martin. New Orleans, 1882.

History of Louisiana—The Spanish Domination, by Chas. Gayarré. New York, 1854.

History of Louisiana—The American Domination, by Chas. Gayarré. New Orleans, 1885.

Histore de la Louisiane, par M. Barbé Marbois. Paris, 1829.

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Creoles of Louisiana, by George W. Cable. New York, 1884.

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Memoirs of My Own Times, by James Wilkinson. 3 vols. Philadelphia, 1816.

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Journal and Account of the Determination of the Boundaries of Louisiana, by Andrew Ellicott. Washington, 1803.

Reports of the Trials of Col. Aaron Burr and Others, by David Robertson. 2 vols. Philadelphia, 1808.

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History of Political Parties in the State of New York, by J. D. Hammond. 2 vols. Albany, 1842.

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Historical Collections of Georgia, by George White. New York, 1855.
Sketches of Louisiana, by Amos Stoddard. Philadelphia, 1812.
History of Alabama, by A. J. Pickett. 2 vols. Charleston, 1851.
Annals of Tennessee, by J. G. M. Ramsey. Charleston, 1853.
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History of Kentucky, by Wm. B. Allen. Louisville, 1872.
Blennerhassett Papers, by Wm. H. Safford. Cincinnati, 1864.
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Life of Gen. William Eaton. Brookfield, 1813.
Johns Hopkins' Historical and Political Studies. Third series. Baltimore, 1885.
France and the United States, by Count A. de Circourt. Boston, 1877.
Struggle for Neutrality in America.—Address New York Historical Society, by Charles Francis Adams. New York, 1871.
Mississippi Question, by William Duane. Philadelphia, 1803.
Transactions of the Oneida Historical Society. Utica, 1881.

It may be noted that Nogales, Walnut Hills, Fort Adams and Vicksburg are the successive names of the same place. In the same way Chickasaw Bluffs and Memphis indicate the same place. The same is true of the Falls of the Ohio and Louisville.

THE ATTEMPTS MADE TO SEPARATE THE WEST FROM THE AMERICAN UNION.

The war of the Revolution was scarcely over and peace declared before there began an effort which, in various forms, was carried on for twenty years, to separate the western portion of the Union from the states on the Atlantic seaboard. The first attempt to divide the Union was by a line running nearly north and south, and along the Alleghany mountains. The cause which gave life to the movement was the vast extent of the territory of the states, the little knowledge of and communication at that time had between the distant parts, and the adverse interests which were created by the difference of climate, and antecedents, and previous nationality, of those now bound together in the American Union.

There is considerable ignorance now, even on the part of well informed persons, as to the condition of the several parts of the country, with all our facilities of travel and communication. It is not strange that this should be much greater when few could ever go far from their own firesides, when newspapers were rare, and high rates of postage made frequent communication impossible. As resulting from this, the provincial stamp set upon the several sections, by reason of climate, and soil, and occupation, would be more fixed, and antagonisms more emphatic than now, when all judgments and tastes are modified by a ready and constant attrition of the most distant parts upon each other.

It could not well be otherwise than that regions so distant and dissimilar, and in so many matters opposed in interest, should find it difficult to pass from the condition of separate and independent provinces to that of a federal union without many

jarrings of discord. This would be especially likely in the earlier days of the government, before the relative rights and duties of the central and state administrations had been adjusted, and when the burdens of debt incurred by a long war had to be borne, and distributed, and paid. In no part of the country was this strain greater than in the recently and sparsely settled regions west of the Alleghanies, where, along with a self-assertion and indisposition to submit easily to control, always characteristic of a frontier life, there was but little ability as yet to bear heavy exactions of impost and taxation, and perhaps no very great sense of the degree of previous protection extended by the central government, as calling from them justly for any large self-sacrifices now. They were poor, and had with great hardships made homes and settlements. The Atlantic states were wealthier, and had done little for them. They were not patient under any heavy burdens to be put on them now.

In order to come fairly to a consideration of these early chafings against the new and strange bonds of union, it will be necessary to remind ourselves of the political situation of the Mississippi valley at that time.

On the third of November, 1762, the French king ceded to Spain all the country known under the name of Louisiana,* which itself, in 1712, Louis XIV had defined in his letters patent to Crozat to be all the country between Mexico and Carolina, the river Mississippi† from the sea to the Illinois, the Missouri river, the Wabash, and all the land, lakes and rivers flowing into any part of the river Mississippi.

This donation was accepted, but the transaction was kept secret, and the king of France continued to act as sovereign. In the treaty of Paris, in 1763, between Spain and France on the one side and Great Britain on the other, it was agreed that the limits of the French and British possessions should be a line drawn along the middle of the Mississippi river from its source to the river Iberville; along the middle of that stream,

*Vergennes, Mem. Sur la Louis., pp. 32–3.

†Martin Louisiana, p. 114.

and of the lakes Maurepas and Pontchartrain* to the sea; and that all on the left side of the Mississippi river, except the town and island of New Orleans, should belong to the king of England. New Orleans and the country to the west were to belong to the king of Spain.

In the same year Great Britain divided Florida into two provinces. West Florida was bounded by the Appalachicola river on the east, and by the thirty-first degree of latitude on the north. In March, 1764, on the representation that important settlements to the north had been left out, the northern boundary was made along a line due east from the mouth of the Yazoo river to the Appalachicola. In 1777, Great Britain purchased of the Choctaws the Natchez district, extending along the Mississippi river from latitude thirty-one, one hundred and ten miles northward to the mouth of the Yazoo.†

In November, 1782, in the preliminary articles, and on the third of September, 1783, in the definitive treaty of peace between the United States and Great Britain, the southern boundary of the United States was determined to be a line drawn from the Mississippi river due east in the northernmost‡ part of the thirty-first degree of latitude to the Chattahoochie river, thence to its junction with the Flint river; thence to the head of the St. Mary's river; thence to the ocean; in all this coinciding with the boundary of east and west Florida, as established in 1763 by Great Britain.

On the same day the treaty of peace between Great Britain and Spain declared an entire cession in full right of east and west Florida to Great Britain to Spain without defining the northern boundary.

From this, as was natural, and, as Pontalba asserts, as England intended, arose a dispute between the United States and Spain. The United States claimed, under its treaty with Great Britain, that its southern boundary line was the thirty-first degree. Spain, on the other hand, claimed, as part of west Florida, all

*Gayarrè, third ser., p. 93.

†Claiborne, Miss., p. 98

‡Treaties U. S. p. 316.

of the territory south of the line running east from the mouth of the Yazoo river, which was one hundred and ten miles further north. To strengthen her title, in June, 1784, Spain made a treaty at Pensacola with the Creeks, Choctaws and Chickasaws inhabiting this district, by which they conceded the Spanish title, and engaged to support it. Subsequently, also, Alexander McGillivray, head chief of the Creeks, and agent of the other tribes of the Muscogee confederacy, acknowledged himself subject to Spain.

Spain had possession of the disputed territory, under the conquest of Galvez, and refused to surrender it to the United States. She erected forts at Nogales, now Vicksburg, and subsequently at New Madrid, and she strengthened her garrisons at Manchac, Baton Rouge and Natchez. Both powers had equitable titles, the dispute arising from the discrepancy in the terms of the treaty made by Great Britain with the two nations. Of course, all this occasioned great bitterness between the powers, and also individuals of each nation.

The district west of the Alleghanies, now comprising the states of Kentucky and Tennessee, was rapidly filling with adventurous persons, many of whom had been in the Revolutionary armies. The severity of Indian depredations was no longer so severely felt, and towns were springing up. The richness of the soil was bringing forth abundant harvests of wheat, and corn, and tobacco, which could only with difficulty seek a market east of the mountains, and must consume themselves in the cost of transit. The natural channel of trade was down the Ohio, Cumberland and Mississippi rivers, and the most advantageous market would be New Orleans. On account of the bitterness, however, between the nations, previous to 1787 all those who ventured on the Mississippi river had their property seized by the first Spanish vessel that was met; and little or no communication was kept up between the respective countries.

The free navigation of the Mississippi river, south of the thirty-first degree, had been reluctantly yielded to Spain.* In

* Writings of Madison, IV., p. 558.

1780–81, when the preliminaries of peace were being discussed in Paris and Madrid, the mutiny of the Pennsylvania line was causing anxiety, and the British forces under Cornwallis and Tarleton were overrunning the South.* There was consequently a fear on the part of the delegates in Congress from South Carolina and Georgia that, if a peace was then forced by the European powers, the principle of *uti possidetis* would cause those states to fall into the hands of Great Britain, which occupied them then. To prevent this, and secure the important adhesion of Spain, the American ministers were instructed that, if Spain inflexibly demanded it as a condition of alliance, the concession of our claim to the free navigation of the Mississippi river, south of the thirty-first degree, should be allowed.

Years had passed and peace was declared, but the United States were still under the confederacy, and suffering from all the weakness which came from that temporary arrangement. Its seat was in New York, at a great distance from the Mississippi valley: and it was but slightly aware of, or concerned about, the consequence of that remote region. In 1785 Mr. Jay, who was conducting a negotiation with Gardoqui, the Spanish representative on this subject, having been called upon by Congress to give his views on the matter, recommended that it would be expedient to conclude a treaty with Spain, limited to twenty or thirty years, and for the United States to stipulate that during the term of the treaty they would forbear to navigate the Mississippi below their southern boundary.† This view was sanctioned by the seven more northern, and opposed by the five more southern states.‡ Seven states in Congress authorized Jay to conclude a treaty with Gardoqui, and restrict the right of the United States to the Mississippi river, while the article of the confederation expressly declared that the United States should enter into no treaty unless nine states in Congress assented to it. But Spain would not even agree to

* White, Georgia, p. 106.

† Butler, History Kentucky, p. 156.

‡ Lives Chief Justices, I, 364.

this stipulation, because it implied an ultimate right in the United States to navigate the river.*

Naturally this apparent indifference or hostility on the part of Congress to what was of vital importance to the western country, the free navigation of the Mississippi river, and the possibility thus of getting a market for their produce, had an irritating effect upon the excitable population of the section. This cause of anger was intensified by the delay of Congress in complying with the request of Kentucky to be received as a state in the Union. The cause of this delay, and afterwards the rejection of the overture, was the fear of disturbing the sectional balance. The eastern states, by a majority of seven to six, were not willing to give their assent to the admission of the district of Kentucky into the Union, as an independent state, unless Vermont,† or the district of Maine, was brought forward at the same time. Back of this disinclination was a further cause. In the settlement of the terms of peace with Great Britain, Congress had abandoned the check of a two-thirds vote on commercial questions, and substituted that of a majority. In the haste to relieve the embarrassments of trade, and restore prosperous business relations, the more commercial states of the north, not waiting for Great Britain to comply with the conditions set for it, such as the surrender of slaves, and the giving up of the posts on the northwestern frontier, immediately removed all restrictions from trade, and left Great Britain, with her large capital free, to compete for the business of the states. This operated to the disadvantage of Virginia and the other southern states,‡ in handing over their tobacco to the monopoly of England. This cause would also act as a bar on the admission of any new southern state that would be likely to change the majority and disturb the existing commercial arrangements.

Spain, however, was on the alert to use for her advantage the anger of the people of Kentucky, aroused by the seeming hos-

* Secret Jour. Cong., IV, p. 296.

† Bancroft, History Constitution, I, 373.

‡ Bland Papers, II, 83. Tyler Letters, I, 102.

tility of the Government of the United States to the dearest interests of the West.

Among those who had come to Lexington, Kentucky, in 1784, to settle was General James Wilkinson. He was born in Maryland, marched with Arnold in 1775 through Maine to Quebec, was at the surrender of Saratoga, and had fallen into disrepute with Washington, and resigned in 1778, because he had told to Lord Stirling, while under the influence of wine, the expressions used by Conway to Gates to the disparagement of the generalship of Washington. He was a wordy, officious, consequential person, who liked to make a profit, and he became engaged in the dry goods trade. In June, 1787, he descended the Ohio and Mississippi to New Orleans, with a cargo of tobacco and flour, determined to try his enterprise and address at the seats of the Spanish government in Louisiana. He was successful, and Governor Miro granted General Wilkinson permission to bring tobacco to New Orleans on favorable terms. Wilkinson also impressed the importance of his influence to such an extent upon the Spanish authorities that a monopoly and special remissions of duty were made to him, so that for some time all the trade from the Ohio was carried on in his name, and a line from him sufficed to ensure to the owner of a boat every privilege and protection that he could desire.

The Spanish government at this time, 1786–87, had projected a plan for colonizing Louisiana from the United States; and Gardoqui, the Spanish minister in New York, had sent several vessels to the Mississippi with colonists. In the depression that existed during the latter years of the confederacy, when the United States had not the ability to pay its old officers and soldiers,* General Steuben, Colonel George Morgan and other Revolutionary officers of rank opened a treaty with Gardoqui for the grant of an extensive district of country west of the Mississippi, upon the plan of establishing a military colony under particular privileges and exemptions. In pursuance of

* Wilkinson, Mem. II, 3.

this, in the winter of 1788–89, Colonel Morgan, of New Jersey, under the sanction of Gardoqui, came down the Ohio with a considerable body of colonists. Gardoqui had made to him a concession of from twelve to fifteen millions of acres on the west side of the Mississippi river, from the mouth of the St. Francis river to Point Cinq Hommes. He proposed to establish a city which in ten years would reach a hundred thousand inhabitants, as near the mouth of the Ohio as the nature of the land would permit, and he called the place New Madrid, in compliment to the Spaniards. To Morgan Gardoqui gave the concession of a free post. Thus privileged and happily situated, commanding the trade of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, the place would intercept all the products of the country going south.

Such a plan, however, did not suit the purposes of Wilkinson. He had his own scheme of colonization, which he broached to Governor Miro, by which he proposed the settlement of several thousand families in west Florida, or on the Arkansas and White rivers, to whom lands were to be granted in proportion to their numbers and condition, and for whom Wilkinson was to be allowed from one to three hundred dollars a family. For this purpose he presented a list of names of persons in Kentucky as emigrants, in order to give consistency to his proposition. Having this scheme view, although it was never realized, Wilkinson discouraged the plans of other colonists on the plea that trade would be diverted from New Orleans. The New Madrid concession was therefore withdrawn ; the colonists scattered, and a fort was erected there.

Wilkinson, on his visit to New Orleans, determined also to demand for his services, for promoting the schemes of colonization into Spanish territory, the privilege of furnishing a considerable annual supply of tobacco to the Mexican market, which he thought would secure immense fortunes to himself and his friends.*

As might be presumed, Wilkinson did not receive these fa-

* Clark, Proofs against Wilkinson, p. 13.

vors from the Spanish governor without making pledges in return. He declared that there was a general abhorrence throughout the western parts against Congress, because of its indifference to their interests in the matter of the navigation of the Mississippi river, and that on this account they were on the point of separating from the Union. He appealed to Spanish fears* on the idea that the British, who still held the northwestern forts, could easily unite with the increasing strength of the western settlements, and invade and take possession of Lousiana, and even of Mexico. Nor did Wilkinson leave New Orleans without a pledge to devote himself to the task of delivering up Kentucky into the hands of the Spanish king.

Wilkinson did not make this declaration without knowing of the intense discontent which existed in that district. The growing population were deeply excited because they had in vain petitioned Congress to secure for them the free use of the Mississippi river, without which it was useless for them to till the ground, since they had no market for their produce; and they were determined to take the matter into their own hands. They were divided up into different parties.† One was for declaring themselves independent of the United States, and forming a new republic, in close alliance with Spain. Another was in favor of becoming a part of Louisiana, and submitting to the laws of Spain. Another party desired to declare war with Spain, and seize New Orleans. Another wanted to prevail on Congress to extort from Spain the free navigation of the river; and still another party wished to have France recover Louisiana and extend her protection to Kentucky.

As Congress, on the third of July, 1788, finally decided to postpone the application of Kentucky to be received into the Union, in one week from that day Mr. John Brown, who represented Kentucky before Congress, wrote a letter to the President of the Kentucky convention that Mr. Gardoqui, the Spanish minister, in a conversation, had stated that‡ "if the peo-

* Gayarrè, Spanish Domination, p. 182.
†Gayarrè, Spanish Domin. p. 252.
‡ Butler, p. 171.

ple of Kentucky would erect themselves into an independent state, and appoint a proper person to negotiate with him, he would enter into an arrangement with them for the exportation of their produce to New Orleans, on terms of mutual advantage."

About this time, May 15, 1788, Wilkinson wrote to Miro that Congress,* because of the present federal compact, can neither dispose of men or money. The new government, should it establish itself, will have to encounter difficulties, which will keep it weak for three or four years, before the expiration of which, "I have good grounds," he said, "to hope that we shall have completed our negotiations, and shall have become too strong to be subjected by any force which may be sent against us." And, also, "When this people shall find out that they can procure articles not manufactured among us more conveniently through this river, the dependent state in which we are will cease, and with it all motives for connection with the other side of the Appalachian Mountains."

Wilkinson was, in the meantime, shipping his cargoes to New Orleans, and prosecuting his profitable business ventures.† His agent, Major Dunn, gave it out as certain that the next year Kentucky would act as an independent state, and Miro writes to the home government, as from Wilkinson, that "the direction of the current of the rivers, which run in front of their dwellings, points clearly to the power to which they ought to ally themselves."‡

In the Kentucky convention of November, 1788, the urgency of Wilkinson bore on the two points: || First, the importance of independence, and of the formation of a state constitution, without waiting for the previous consent of the parent state of Virginia; and second, the securing of the free navigation of the Mississippi, even though this could only be secured by a Spanish connection. In reciting the results of that convention to Miro, Wilkinson writes: "To consolidate the interests § and

* Gayarrè S. D., p. 210.
† Bancroft, Consti., I, p. 398.
‡ Gayarrè S. D. p. 212.
|| Butler, Ken., p. 172.
§ Gayarrè S. D., p. 227.

confirm the confidence of our friends, to try our strength, to provoke the resentment of Congress with a view to stimulate that body into some invidious act which might excite the passions of the people—these are the motives which influenced me . . . In order to prevent the suspicions and feelings of distrust already existing here, and inflame the animosity between the eastern and western states, Spain must resort to every artifice in her power. . . . Every manifestation of the power of Spain, and of the debility of the United States, every evidence of the resolution of the former to retain exclusively to herself the right of navigation on the Mississippi, will facilitate our views. Every circumstance, also, that will tend to impede our admission as an independent state, will increase the discontent of the people and favor the execution of our plan."

Wilkinson also sought to increase in the Spanish governor the sense of obligation for his services by dilating on the address* with which he had caused the British Doctor Connally, an emissary from Lord Dorchester, the governor of Canada, who had come to offer English assistance in any expedition in the west to secure the free navigation of the Mississippi, to return affrighted to his own country after having accomplished nothing.

The result of it all was that the Spanish governor, who was not without his doubts all along that Wilkinson had motives of his own, commercial or otherwise, in his pro-Spanish declarations, sent him five thousand dollars for the outlay that Wilkinson declared that he had been at, and half as much more with which to corrupt Marshall and Muter, who were opposed to the Spanish connection.†

The causes operating in Kentucky in favor of Spain also manifested themselves in the western settlements of North Carolina. In order to make a fund for the payment of her debts, Congress had asked the states to cede to her all their vacant lands to the west, that they might be sold to pay Rev-

*Blennerhassett Papers, p. 87. Gayarrè, S. D., p. 235.
†Gayarré, S. D., p. 256.

olutionary claims.* North Carolina did this, and ceded the two counties of Cumberland and Washington, which constitute the present state of Tennessee. In compliance with this act the people assembled, under the leadership of General Sevier, the hero of the battle of King's Mountain, and proceeded to organize the state of Frankland. In a few months after North Carolina rescinded its previous action and recalled its cession of land.† This enraged the people west of the mountains, who were poor, and had borne privations, and were harassed by taxes, and the great distance of the courts in which they might seek redress. There ensued, therefore, some acts of violence in the contention between the two jurisdictions. The settlers on the Cumberland river, which ran through the district and sought the gulf, were deeply interested in the navigation of the Mississippi, and, therefore, were operated on by the same motives as those which were stirring up Kentucky.‡

On the twelfth of September, 1788, in his resentment, General Sevier wrote to Gardoqui to inform him that the inhabitants of Frankland were unanimous in their vehement desire to form an alliance and treaty of commerce with Spain, and put themselves under her protection. They named the county of Cumberland, in West Tennessee, Miro, in compliment of the Spanish governor. These overtures were flattering to Spanish pride, but had to be received with caution, because Spain was at peace with the United States. A concession was, however, made, that the people of the Washington and Miro districts should have the privilege of carrying their produce down the Mississippi to the market of New Orleans on a duty of fifteen per cent., which Miro reserved the right of reducing according to his pleasure in behalf of any men of influence who might be named by the Spanish agent. Miro communicated with Wilkinson with regard to these negotiations, and a system of

*While these lands were a cause of contention, they furnished also a common interest which kept the country together. Johns Hopkins' Historical Studies, third ser., I., Introduction.

† Spark's Franklin, X, p. 290.

‡ Ramsey, Tennessee, p. 298 ; Gayarrê, S. D. p. 257.

cypher messages between them was devised to ensure secrecy.

In the year 1789, a powerful company was formed in South Carolina, and purchased from the state of Georgia an immense tract of land, including fifty-two thousand square miles, and extending on the Mississippi river from the Yazoo to the neighborhood of Natchez. As this was in the debatable ground between the United States and Spain, no time was lost by the company in endeavoring to come to a good understanding with the Spanish authorities in New Orleans. Their alliance was sought, and the company declared its desire to form itself into an advantageous rampart for Spain. Miro communicated the business to Wilkinson, who immediately addressed himself to the South Carolina gentlemen, protesting his own disinterestedness, and influence with the Spanish governor, and their need to have the services in New Orleans for the negotiations of a gentleman of distinction, with full powers, and offering himself for the position. He loaned to Captain Cape, the agent of the South Carolina company, according to his statement to the Spanish governor. three thousand dollars, to secure his influence. His efforts, for a time, did not seem to be without result. Miro praised Wilkinson for the part that he had acted toward the company. On the twenty-fourth of May, James O'Fallon, the general agent for the South Carolina company, wrote to Miro, from Lexington, Kentucky, the residence of Wilkinson, that he had "prevailed upon the company to consent to be the slaves of Spain, that they had formed the resolution of separating themselves from the Union, and that all that they desired from the Spanish Crown was a secret coöperation, which would soon ripen into a sincere friendship."*

Thus, throughout the whole west, the restlessness of the frontier settlers, along with the feebleness of the confederacy, worked, with the machinations of Spain, to bring about a disposition for the severance of the western country from the United States, with the hope of placing it under the protection of that power which held the key of the situation, in the posses-

*Gayarrè, S. D. p, 289.

sion of the mouth of the Mississippi river. And in this business General Wilkinson was the principal agent of the Spanish governor, and a stipendiary upon the Spanish treasury. Thus, later, when his offices seemed to bear less results, the governor writes to the home secretary that in his opinion the general should be retained in the service with an annual pension of two thousand dollars; and he also recommends that a pension be granted to Colonel Sebastian, of Kentucky, because "he will be able to enlighten me on the conduct of Wilkinson, and on what we have to expect from the plans of the said brigadier-general."* One spy was hired to watch the other spy.

But such a plan of securing Spanish dominancy in the west could not permanently be successful. In the first place it was founded upon deceit and stealth. Then the texture of character of the hardy American would inevitably in the end prevail as a ruling interest and controlling power as against the weaker and subtler nature of the Spaniard. Furthermore, the scheming had profited by the weakness of the confederacy. This, however, in 1789, gave place to the greater efficiency of the Union under the present constitution; and the firm and wise administration of Washington soon began to tell in the respect for authority, and the greater cohesion of the parts. Besides this, the reduction of the tariff on the part of Spain on shipments down the Mississippi, diminished the inducements for separation, and the greater numbers and boldness of the western settlements made it clear to the Spanish authorities that they must change their tone of menace.

In the year 1791, the Spanish intrigues in the west and south began to slacken from want of success, and the United States set on foot persuasives, through its minister in Madrid, to have Spain give up New Orleans, and confine itself to the western bank of the Mississippi river.

While these efforts were making, the west came to feel some of the effects of an agitation which was dividing political parties in the east, and had its origin on the continent of Europe. A

*Gayarrè, S. D., p. 286.

supposed inclination* towards Great Britain, our old antagonist, was a mark of the Federal party, which dominated in the administration of President Washington. A sympathy with France, our former ally, was the characteristic of the Republican party, which was in opposition, and whose leader a little later was Jefferson. The one side emphasized the necessity of strengthening the Federal Union; the other party asserted the original rights of the states, and enlarged upon the dangers of centralization. The bitterness between the parties was for many years most violent.

In 1793, the sympathy in this country with France, which was in the throes of revolution, took the form of the organization of democratic societies, at first in Philadelphia, which violently proclaimed the most extreme anarchical notions of universal rights, such as had broken to pieces the social order in France. There would, therefore, be little wonder that in Kentucky, where Great Britain was charged with being the instigator of the barbarous Indian depredations, and where many of the old soldiers lived who had fought along side of the French during the Revolutionary struggle, similar societies should be organized.† Genet, the French minister in this country, appealed to the alliance of 1778 as the ground on which we should side with his country in its differences with England, made a triumphal progress through the states, dealt out commissions to privateers, enlisted officers and men,‡ organized Jacobin clubs, and sent out four § agents to Kentucky, who set on foot societies in Georgetown, Lexington and Paris. They issued addresses, in which they traded on the grievances of the western people, enlarged on the advantages which would flow from their separating themselves from the rest of the United States, and the glorious results which would accrue from going down and freeing Louisiana from the thraldom of Spain and

*Barbè Marbois, His. Louisiane. p. 241.
† Blennerhasset Pap. p. 101.
‡ Lives Chief Justices, I, p. 390.
§ American State Pap., I., 455.

setting up a republic there. They called upon the French in Louisiana to rise against their present rulers.

A force of two thousand men was enlisted for this expedition, at the head of which George Rogers Clark* accepted the office of "Major General of the Army of France, and Commander-in-Chief of the Revolutionary Legions of the Mississippi river."

The firmness of Washington compelled the recall of Genet, the French minister, and this caused the collapse of the intended movement against the Spanish posts.†

At this time there were symptoms of a war between Great Britain and Spain. The former power had not yet given up possession of the forts on our northwestern frontiers. It held them with the hope that they might be of advantage in strengthening its hold on the western parts of America. There is good reason for believing that its purpose was, if war had been declared with Spain, to march its troops through the western territories and seize upon Louisiana. The Spanish minister alleged this to our government, and induced it to strengthen its frontier posts and issue strict orders against the passage of any British troops through our territory. Our government was the more induced to do this as it was endeavoring to persuade the Spanish ministry to consent to a cession of the district east of the Mississippi.

So soon, however, as the danger of invasion was past, the Spanish governor at New Orleans, Carondolet, again imposed restrictions upon the commerce on the Mississippi, endeavoring thus to show to the western people that their only hope lay in a separation from the United States. Along with this, renewed efforts were made to subsidize leading citizens of the west in favor of the Spanish interests. The United States were being pressed from without by troubles with Great Britain, France and Spain. The whiskey insurrection in Pennsylvania was putting‡ to a strain the relations of federal and state au-

* Butler, p. 224.

† Barbè Marbois, p. 167.

‡ Monette, History, Valley Miss. II, p. 202.

thority, and requiring the militia of several states to quell it. Hamilton's financial plans had not yet begun to ease the public credit. All the northwestern tribes of Indians were harassing the Ohio and Kentucky settlements. England on the northwest, and Spain on the southwest, were pressing on both flanks of the western territories, to cause them to break loose from the Union into permanent separation.

While the United States were pushing Spain for a settlement of the boundary line, and for amicable commercial arrangements by diplomacy, Spain was endeavoring to break the force of the pressure by securing the influence of the leading men of Kentucky on its side by bribery. In the summer of 1795,* Carondolet sent Gayoso up the Mississippi river, with a force, under the pretense that it was to be used for the building of a fort at the Chickasaw bluffs; but Gayoso went on to New Madrid, and informed Don Thomas Portell that he had important dispatches which must go forward immediately to Kentucky. Portell gave them to Thomas Power, who had been charged with a similar secret embassy before. Power made his way to Kentucky and delivered Carondolet's letter to Wilkinson, who had two years before reëntered the military service of the United States. Wilkinson and Power had nocturnal meetings in Cincinnati, and Wilkinson gave him letters to Carondolet, in which he recommended the following points to the Spanish governor:† *First*, that cargoes should be sent up from New Orleans to the Ohio river, by which the confidence of the people should be gained, and the channel pointed out and made familiar through which they could best receive foreign commodities. *Second*, the mouth of the Ohio should be strongly fortified, and works erected of such strength as to arrest for one campaign the progress of any army that should come down from the north. *Third*, a bank, with a million of dollars of capital should be established in Kentucky, and the leading characters in the country be made directors. *Fourth*, General

* Clark, p. 221.

† Gayarré, S. D., p. 360. Clark, Notes, p. 34.

George Rogers Clark, and his adherents, who had been in the pay of the French Republic* recently, should be brought into the service of Spain, which should increase its agents in Kentucky, and establish a magazine at New Madrid.

Under Wilkinson's direction, Power was joined at Redbanks by Colonel Sebastian, and it was intended that they should be joined by Messrs. Innes, Murray and Nicholas. These last did not come, and Power and Sebastian went to New Madrid, and thence proceeded to New Orleans to meet the governor. The next year Power again communicated dispatches from Carondolet to Wilkinson, and carried him nine thousand dollars concealed in barrels of sugar.†

In the meantime the negotiations between the United States and Spain reached the point that, on the twenty-seventh of October, 1795, a treaty was signed in Madrid,‡ which stipulated that the southern boundary of the United States should be the thirty-first degree, and that within six months after the ratification of the treaty the troops of each power should retire to its own side of the boundary; that, within that time, also, commissions on each side should be appointed to run and mark the line; that the middle of the Mississippi river should be the western boundary of the United States to the thirty-first parallel; that the whole width of the river from its source to the sea should be free to the people of the United States, and that the people of the United States should, for a period of three years, be permitted to use the port of New Orleans as a place of deposit and export, with only local charges, and that after this the time, by further negotiation, might be extended, or some other point on the island of New Orleans designated for the purpose.

Although this treaty was thus concluded, it was very evident that there was very little idea that the measure was anything more than a temporary piece of diplomatic finesse, which

* Blenn., Papers, p. 101.

† Clark, Notes, p. 37.

‡ Gayarré, S. D., p. 356. Treaties U. S., p. 776.

would not be carried into effect, and would soon be abrogated. Spain was on the point of declaring war against Great Britain, and desired to secure the United States as a neutral power, between Canada and Louisiana, to prevent invasion on the part of Great Britain. Not for one moment did the efforts in the direction of subsidizing individuals cease.

In June, 1796, Governor Gayoso* wrote that the treaty of the year before never would be carried into effect. Great Britain had, in 1794, made a treaty with the United States, the object of which was to attach them to her interests, and to counterbalance this Spain had made her treaty of limits. As Great Britain had totally failed in her object,† the governor thought that Spain should not regard her stipulations. Besides, it was expected that several states would separate from the Union, and this would absolve Spain from its engagements. He concluded, therefore, that nothing but the free navigation of the Mississippi would be the result of the treaty.

On the death of General Wayne, in December, 1796, Wilkinson succeeded to the command of the American army. He had intimated to Baron de Carondolet that he was getting ready a force to accompany the commissioner, Mr. Andrew Ellicott, to take possession of the forts of Natchez and Walnut Hills, and to run the territorial line between the possessions of the two powers under the treaty. The baron was determined not to surrender the territory. He, therefore, secretly commissioned Mr. Power, in May, 1797, to go to General Wilkinson, in order to state to him that, on account of the doubts as to the manner of delivering the posts, and the apprehension that a British force was marching from Canada to attack upper Louisiana, he was resolved to retain the forts until he could receive the decision of the Spanish minister. He, therefore, requested that the march of the American troops be suspended until such decision could be reached.

The Spaniards had some grounds for the fear which they ex-

* Martin, Louis, p. 269.

† Stoddard's Sketches, p. 99.

pressed. The Spanish governor still retained possession of the post at Natchez. So long as this was done, it kept open all the irritating questions as to boundaries between the Americans in the districts of Tennessee and Mississipp, and the Indian tribes in that section. The Americans complained because their government seemed so slow in asserting its rights against Spain and protecting them from the Indians. At this juncture, in April, 1797, Mr. Blount, the United States Senator from Tennessee, who had a wide influence in his state, entered into a secret correspondence* with the English envoy in this country, Mr. Liston, the object of which was to induce England to send forces from Canada by Lake Michigan, down the Mississippi river, where boats and abundance of provisions would be sent to them from Kentucky and Tennessee; and they would rapidly descend the river, overcome the feeble Spanish garrison at New Orleans, and occupy the whole of Louisiana and Florida. This correspondence, however, in transmission to England, fell into the hands of a person who thought it his duty to send it to the President. In consequence of this, the plan fell through, and Mr. Blount was expelled from the Senate. The scheme, however, affrighted the Spaniards when they heard of it.

Baron Carondelet, when he therefore sought to delay the giving up of the posts on the Mississippi river, and sent Mr. Powers on his mission, gave him instructions so confidential that he was only to retain them in his memory.† He directed him, while traveling through the western country, to sound the disposition of the people as he went. He gave him also a system of signs in writing his dispatches, which would indicate whether he found a hostile condition, and as to the number of pieces of artillery and any other warlike preparations which he might find. He was also to persuade the people, as he was able, that the delivery of the posts to the United States was opposed to the interests of the western people, who, as they would have one day to separate from the Atlantic states, would

*Barbè Marboi's, p. 176. American State Papers II, p. 76. Ellicott's Journal, p. 64.
† Gayarrè, S. D., p. 360. Wilkinson, Mem., II, note 46.

find themselves without communication with lower Louisiana, from whence they might expect powerful help in artillery, arms, ammunition and money as soon as ever the western states should determine on a separation; and that for this reason the west, in allowing Congress to take these posts from Spain, was forging fetters for itself.

The baron then stated to Power some propositions which he desired him to place before Messrs. Sebastian, Innes, Murray and Nicholas, and any other persons pointed out by them.

First. They were to exert all their influence in impressing on the minds of the inhabitants of the western country a conviction of the necessity of their withdrawing and separating themselves from the federal Union, and forming an independent government wholly unconnected with that of the Atlantic states. To prepare for this, the most eloquent and popular writers should, in well-timed publications, expose, in the most striking point of view, the inconveniences and disadvantages that a longer connection with and dependence on the Atlantic states must draw upon them; and the benefits they will certainly reap from a secession ought to be forcibly pointed out. The baron pledged himself to appropriate one hundred thousand dollars for the use of those who should engage in this work, and to indemnify those who should lose any positions thereby. *

Second—Immediately after the declaration of independence, Fort Massac, on the Ohio, near the mouth of the Cumberland, was to be taken possession of by the new government, which would be furnished arms by the king of Spain, who would further engage to supply one hundred thousand dollars for raising and maintaining such troops.

Third—He was to endeavor to discover General Wilkinson's disposition, and he thought it scarcely possible that he would prefer to command the army of the Atlantic states to that of being the Washington of the western states, that at the slightest movement he will be named as the general of the new re-

*Clark, Notes, p. 82.

public, that the army is weak, and devoted to Wilkinson, and nothing is required but an instant of firmness to make the people of the west perfectly happy. To suffer the instant to escape would be for them to place themselves forever under the oppression of the Atlantic states.

The baron declared that Spain, limiting itself to the possession of the forts of Natchez and Walnut Hills, would cede to the western states all the east bank of the Mississippi from thirty-one degrees to the Ohio, which would form a very extensive and powerful republic, and that Spain would not interfere with its constitution and laws. Mr. Power was also directed to conciliate Mr. Ellicott, the American commissioner, and endeavor to induce him to come to New Orleans.*

Mr. Power went secretly through Tennessee overland, to avoid the forts, to Kentucky, and had an interview with Sebastian, and the others, and then went on to Detroit, where General Wilkinson was. Wilkinson was no longer so sanguine as to the hopefulness of a separation of the western states, for the reason that so many of the purposes for which there had been such a desire, had now by treaty been realized. He complained of having been betrayed before; but he told Power that if he was made governor of Natchez, he would there have opportunities to comply with the baron's political desires. He held secret meetings with Power; while, because of the suspicions that he was conscious were resting on him for his Spanish dealings,† he publicly sent Power away under guard, and, apparently, in disgrace.‡ Power, on his return to New Orleans, gave a discouraging account of the disposition of the great body of the western people in the matter of separation.

In November, 1798, Mr. Ellicott, the commissioner, states that by a very extraordinary accident a letter from the governor-general, on its way to a confidential officer in the Spanish

*Clark, p. 84.

†Clark, p. 89; Wilkinson Mem., II, Note 48.

‡Clark, Notes, p. 97.

service, fell into his hands. The letter contained the most unequivocal proof of the late existence of a plan to injure the United States, in which a number of citizens were engaged, and a correspondence between Spanish officials, and one whom he indicates as General Wilkinson. He says that dispatches and twenty thousand dollars in silver were sent up from New Orleans; and although the boat was searched, these articles were overlooked. These facts he communicated in cypher to the State Department.*

On the twenty-ninth of March, 1799, the Spaniards having lost all hope of causing a dismemberment of the Union, evacuated the forts at Natchez, and the United States troops on the next day entered into occupation. Thus ended the long cherished dreams of Spain to build up a strong nation at the gateway of the Mississippi. So long ago as 1783, the Count de Aranda, the Spanish minister, declared to his king his belief that both France and Spain had acted in opposition to their own interests in espousing the cause of the colonies. "This Federal Republic," he said, "is now a pigmy. The day will come when she will be a giant. She will forget the services she has received from the powers which have helped her, and will think only of her own aggrandizement." By the strange irony of fortune, all that Spain received for the alliance of 1778 was the Floridas, by which she hoped to retain the commercial control of the Gulf of Mexico, which for years had been slipping away; but in this she was disappointed. All that she had was eight years' possession of Florida and Louisiana, and the revisionary right of the latter from France. By recognizing the political existence of a great, independent nation in the new world, Spain condemned herself to lose, sooner or later, the magnificent transatlantic domain, the sovereignty of which had been transmitted by the princes of Austria to the Bourbons.†

The treaty with Spain in 1795, gave to the citizens of the United States the right to deposit produce in New Orleans, for

* Blennerhasset Pap. p. 429. Ellicott's Journal, p. 183.

† R. C. Winthrop, 'France and United States,' p. 38.

export trade, for the period of three years, which time might be extended, or some other point on the island designated for the purpose. The attitude of Spain to this country in 1799 was not pacific. Her privateers preyed upon our commerce, and in July the Intendant Morales issued an order prohibiting the use of New Orleans as a place of deposit by the western people, without designating any other point.* Naturally, when this order became known, it excited the most intense indignation. The west had become too strong and resolute to endure this closing up of her great artery of trade.

An immediate campaign was set on foot against Louisiana. President Adams called for the raising of twelve new regiments. Three regiments were ordered to assume a position near the mouth of the Ohio, and to keep their boats in readiness to go down the river. General Washington accepted the chief command† of the armies raised in the east and west. He, however, died that fall, and the retirement of Mr. Adams from the Presidency, and the entire change in Federal politics, caused a suspension of hostilities, and a disbanding of the regiments in the summer of 1800.‡

In the meantime Napoleon,¶ whose power was at its zenith in Europe, had set on foot inquiries which gave him the most minute information about Louisiana, and he had determined as a part of the vast system which he had planned with which to aggrandize France, to acquire this then Spanish province. A remarkable memoir,§ prepared for him by Mr. Pontalba, who had long resided in the colony, and had held official position under Spain, states, with extraordinary comprehensiveness and eloquence, the present and prospective importance of the country about the mouth of the Mississippi. He says that Louisiana is the key of America, and, therefore, of the highest importance, and has been for a long time past the object of the

*Barbé Marbois, p. 233. Gayarrè, S. Dom., p. 399.
†Sparks' Washington, XI, p. 395.
‡Gayarrè, S. D., p. 409.
¶ Barbè Marbois, p. 184.
§ Gayarrè, S. D., p. 410.

ambition of the United States. He argued that an appropriation of three millions of francs, to be placed in the western country, would procure the immigration of thirty thousand persons to the better lands near the mouth of the Mississippi, and that the immigrants from Kentucky and the neighboring districts would sell their lands and come down into Louisiana, where they could have land for nothing, and better facilities for trade. He also showed that France would in this hold the key of Mexico, and be able to control its commerce. He thought such a power, affording the best market for all this grown in the Mississippi valley, would present a powerful motive to induce the inhabitants of the western districts to separate from the United States, in order to form an alliance with France, with the obligation that they should defend Louisiana in case of an attack from the United States. He spoke of the powerful influence which General Wilkinson—although he did not call him by name, as not desiring to expose him—had extended on behalf of Spanish interests for a series of years, and expressed no doubt but that such interest could still be secured.

Pontalba presented his memoir on the fifteenth of September, 1800, and on the first of October a treaty was concluded at St. Ildefonso,* an article of which was that the king of Spain engaged to retrocede to the French Republic within six months after the execution of the treaty with the Duke of Parma, the province of Louisiana, with the same limits that it had then in the hands of Spain, that it had when France possessed it, and for such enlarged territory as had been acquired from the treaties which had subsequently been made between Spain and other states. The stipulation with the Duke of Parma was that Napoleon was to put the duke, who was a member of the Spanish house of Bourbons, in possession of Tuscany, and erect it into a kingdom. For this boon Spain was to cede Louisiana to France. The vast territory, therefore, included under the name of Louisiana was bartered off for a petty Ital-

* 'Barbè Marbois,' p. 184.

ian principality. As France was at war with Great Britain, and this power was master of the sea, and could easily attack and conquer Louisiana, if known to be a French dependency, all knowledge of the treaty between France and Spain was carefully concealed, and Spanish officials remained in power.

The cession of Louisiana to France was a blow to the United States,* as it placed at the gateway of the Mississippi a strong and aggressive power, instead of a weak one, such as Spain was. It was also a menace to Great Britain, because, if France extended her influence up the Mississippi river towards the British possessions in Canada, it virtually destroyed the results of the Seven Years' war and the treaty of 1763. Intimations of the ratification of the treaty of cession gradually came to the ears of our ministers abroad; and they set on foot remonstrances against it. Before publicity was had, however, peace was concluded, on the first of October, 1801, between Great Britain and France; and, concealment being no longer necessary, the latter power immediately prepared to send twenty-five thousand troops to Louisiana.

Delay in dispatching the force, however, resulted from a difference between Spain and France as to the meaning of the treaty; whether the cession included Florida or not. In the meantime the Mississippi, which had been opened for deposits at New Orleans in 1801, was on the sixteenth of October, in the next year, closed again, in accordance with the policy of the Spaniards to discourage the settlement of Americans in Louisiana. This produced great excitement throughout the country, as it also came near causing a famine in New Orleans by stopping the supplies of flour and other western produce. Strong remonstrances were made to the general government against the injury caused to the west by these repeated interruptions of her commerce. Barbè Marbois, in his history, gives a specimen of some of the language used by the western people.† "The Mississippi," said they, "is ours by nature. Its mouth

* Bauduy des Lozieres, Sec. Voy., p. 195.

† P. 235. Gayarré, S. D., p. 456.

is the only issue which nature has given to our waters, and we wish to use it for our vessels. No power shall deprive us of this right. If our most perfect liberty in this matter is disputed, nothing shall prevent us from taking possession of the Capital, and when we are once masters of it, we shall know how to maintain ourselves there. If Congress refuses us effectual protection, we will adopt the measures which our safety requires, even if they endanger the peace of the Union, and our connection with the other states. No protection, no allegiance."

Mr. Livingston, the American minister in Paris, sent over specially by Mr. Jefferson to settle this business, discovered that the projected establishment in Louisiana was disapproved of by every statesman in France* as certain to cause a great waste in men and money, excite enmities and produce no possible advantage to the nation. Mr. Livingston pressed upon the French government the expediency of their selling the country to the United States. The United States, he said, did not desire the territory west of the Mississippi river, and by ceding the district on the eastern side, the respective nations would have the river as a safe boundary, and the claims of American citizens also against France for spoliations could be satisfied. Mr. Madison, the Secretary of State, in representing to Mr. Livingston the sensibility of the western people on this subject, and the reasonableness of this sensibility, said: "The Mississippi to them is everything. It is the Hudson, the Delaware, the Potomac and all the navigable streams of the Atlantic states formed into one stream."†

The denial of the right to deposit was taken up in Congress, when it was seen that efforts at negotiation for redress were fruitless, and resolutions were passed in the House to raise eighty thousand troops to vindicate the natural right of the western country to the free navigation of the Mississippi.‡

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* Amer. State Pap., II, p. 513.
† Gayarré, S. D., p. 473.
‡ Gayarré, S. D., p. 492.

While these negotiations were going on, war was on the point of breaking out again between Great Britain and France, and the prospect of this forced the question of the ownership of the territory to its issue. For if France still held possession after war was declared, Great Britain, which had a fleet in the Gulf of Mexico, would seize Louisiana, and France would lose it and get nothing. On the eleventh of April, 1803, Talleyrand asked* the American minister whether he wished to have the whole of Louisiana. Mr. Livingston, in his reply, showed what to us now seems a singular lack of perception in his estimate of the relative value of the parts in question. Louisiana included then the whole country west of the Mississippi, as far as Mexico and the Pacific, and north as far as the British lines; and also, as the United States then supposed, east and west Florida. It afterwards appeared that east Florida had not been ceded to France by Spain,† and therefore could not be sold. When Talleyrand then asked Livingston whether the United States desired to have the whole of the country, Livingston replied that they did not, that they wished only for New Orleans and the Floridas. Talleyrand replied that if France gave New Orleans, the rest would be of little value to her, and he wished an offer from the United States for the whole of it.

The interest was intense on both sides of the ocean. Napoleon had set his heart on this plan for the extension of France; a force was ready to start under Bernadotte to occupy the country; war was instantly impending between France and Great Britain; the ministers of the United States and France were having daily conferences. Our country was still poor, and could not afford to pay large purchase money. The difference between what was first offered, twenty millions, and what France demanded, one hundred millions of francs, made the prospect of agreement remote. To make a result more feasible, and yet with a strange insensibility to the future importance of the region in question, Mr. Livingston even suggested to Mr. Mad-

* Barbè Marbois, p. 305.

† Barbè Mar., p. 313.

ison that, if only New Orleans and the Floridas could be kept, the purchase money to be paid might be raised by the sale of the territory west of the Mississippi river, with the right of sovereignty, to some power in Europe, whose vicinity we should not fear.*

At length, on the tenth of April, 1803, Napoleon expressed his purpose to sell, and on the thirtieth the treaty was signed by which the whole of Louisiana, including west Florida, all that had been acquired by France from Spain,† was transferred to the United States, on the condition of the payment of sixty millions of francs, exclusive of the amounts due by France to American citizens on account of spoliations, which account the United States assumed. ‡When Napoleon was informed of the signing of the treaty, he prophetically said: "This accession of territory strengthens forever the power of the United States, and I have given to England a maritime rival that will sooner or later humble her pride.||"

The first point gained in the effort to secure the reluctant consent of Napoleon to the sale of Louisiana, was the absolute pledge which Mr. Livingston extorted, that the claims of our merchants by reason of the spoliations by French privateers should be paid. This compelled § that something should be done. In the treaty with France in 1778, however, the United States had pledged themselves to France, as one of the conditions of the alliance, to guarantee forever all the possessions in America which France had or should have.¶ This was a vast and perpetual obligation, which the United States

* Gayarré S. D., p. 509.

† Amer. State P. I. p. 507

‡ It is a curious fact, brought out recently by M. Leon Say, that there is no trace whatever in the French archives of the receipt of the fifteen millions of dollars paid by the United States for the purchase of Louisiana. Napoleon probably appropriated it to his own use. It has been surmised that he treated with the American commissioners directly through Marbois, rather than through his minister, Talleyrand, because of his fears of the latter's well known rapacity.—'Adams' Neutrality in America.' p. 35.

|| Barbé Mar., p. 314.

§ Oneida Historical Coll., 1881, p. 166.

¶ Treaties U. S. p. 243.

had not seen the full effect of. This would have to be abrogated. France would only consent to it, however, on the assumption by the United States of the payment of the debts which France owed to our marine for spoliations. Thus the little word "forever," in the treaty,* was only redeemed twenty-three years after at the price of ten millions of dollars, which the United States pledged itself to pay, and not one cent of which French claims has up to this time been paid to our citizens.

This whole business had to be concluded in Paris, with no special communications from this country, the United States ministers, Livingston, and Monroe who had been specially sent, taking the responsibility. The vote in the Senate to ratify the treaty was twenty-six to six, these last all being from New England. In the debate † objections were made to the treaty, and strong fears were expressed of the stability of the government with its citizens removed two or three thousand miles from the capital, where they could scarcely feel the rays of the general government. Senator White of Tennessee declared that he would rather see the territory to the west of the Mississippi *given* to France, to Spain, or to any other nation, upon the mere condition that no citizen of the United States should ever settle within its limits, than to have it *sold* for one hundred millions of dollars, and we retain the sovereignty.

So soon as Spain heard of the sale to the United States,‡ she vigorously protested, because France had covenanted with her never to part with the country, and she declared that she ought to have had the first chance for purchase. For a time it was thought that Spain would not make a peaceful surrender. The French had sent Laussat to Louisiana as a commissioner to receive the district from Spain, before the cession was made to the United States. On the thirtieth of November, 1803, Spain surrendered Louisiana to France. On the twentieth of Decem-

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* C. F. Adams. Add. N. Y. Hist. Soc., 1870, p. 38.

† Gayarré S. D. p. 561.

‡ Barbé Mar., p. 345. Gayarré, S. D., p. 535.

ber, twenty days after, the tricolored standard of France gave place to the American flag.*

A recognition of the immense issues which were at stake in the possession of the mouth of the Mississippi river will be had in this rapid statement of the varied means used to maintain the control of it, and the reluctance shown in parting with it. The west was constantly becoming a larger factor in the nation; and, in the manifestation of its discontent at the monopolizing by the east of all the great offices, it succeeded in causing the nation to purchase, for an amount which was then quite exhausting, the outlet of its great river and the country beyond, the wealth of which was only afterwards apprehended. Still New Orleans was, at the time of the purchase, virtually a foreign city, with only a comparatively small American colony in it. Many of the Spanish officers remained as residents, ready to sympathize with any movement hostile to the United States, and they had ultimately to be requested by the governor to remove. The purchase of the territory put a stop, however, for some time, to the efforts of conspirators.

The source from which sprang the motive for the next attempt at the separating of the west from the Union was the disappointed ambition of one of the most astute and daring men in American political life. That which furnished opportunity and hope to Burr, or any other adventurer, was the vast stakes that would fall into the hands of the boldest schemer, in the largely unsettled but fertile regions of the west, the remains of prejudice yet existing against the older and more calculating communities in the east, and the lack of entire national and social homogeneity arising from distance and imperfect communication. All this caused the eyes of disappointed ambition to turn for more hopeful fields of exercise to the new and more excitable communities in the west.

In the general election of 1801, Mr. Jefferson and Colonel Burr were found to have received the same number of electoral votes for President and Vice-President.† No one receiving a

* Martin, p. 295. Barbé Mar., p. 352. † Davis, Burr, I, 435.

majority of votes, the decision went to the House of Representatives. It was evident that the Republicans had intended their votes for Mr. Jefferson for President and Colonel Burr for Vice-President. When, however, the Federalists despaired of electing their candidate, Mr. Adams, they, in considerable numbers together with some Republicans, turned to Colonel Burr, and voted for him for President against Jefferson, and this with Burr's connivance. The contest was prolonged until within a few days of the time of the inauguration, when Mr. Jefferson was elected President and Colonel Burr Vice-President. His alleged complottings with the Federalists in this contest to seize the presidency were the occasion of the political feuds† in New York which resulted in the duel with Alexander Hamilton July 11, 1804. After Mr. Hamilton's death, Colonel Burr had to flee before the intense popular indignation, and was for a number of months in obscurity in the south. He returned to Washington in the winter of 1804–5, and took his place as the president of the senate. He was, however, himself aware that from the odium in which he was held his political fortunes were at an end. His term as Vice-President closed March 3, 1805, but he left Washington for Philadelphia before the close of the session, after making a speech of farewell which moved his bitterest opponents to tears.

General Wilkinson was in Washington at the time, having just been appointed governor of Louisiana,‡ with residence in St. Louis. He was an old friend of Burr. They had fought before Quebec together in 1775. He showed great interest in the fortunes of his former comrade. Wilkinson commended him to the delegates from Louisiana in Washington, and told them that so soon as Burr's vice-presidency was at an end he would go to Louisiana, where he had certain projects; adding that he was a man who would succeed in anything that he would undertake, and, throwing out mysterious hints, asked them to give him all the information in their power respecting that country.

† Hammond's Polit. Hist. N. Y., I., p. 131. ‡Blennerhassett Pap., p. 432.

He also expressed to Matthew Lyon, the eccentric member from Kentucky, originally from Vermont, and who subsequently came out to Missouri, his sorrow that a person of Burr's brilliant abilities was about to be lost to public life, and wondered what he could do. Wilkinson urged* that a foreign mission be secured for him; but Lyon assured him that this would be impossible. Lyon, however, suggested that he might, if he took the right steps at once, be returned to Congress from Tennessee. To do this, however, he must instantly set out that spring, make a residence, and begin the practice of law in Nashville, and during the summer let his friends indicate that he would stand for Congress; and Mr. Lyon thought his abilities would, in the fall, secure him the position, and his killing of Hamilton would be found to have done him no injury. Burr took the matter up leisurely, allowed himself to loiter over a project for the cutting of a canal at the Falls of the Ohio, started for the west, went down the river, stopped at Blennerhassett's island, not however meeting the owner, as he was not at home, and so went on to Louisville. From thence he set out overland for Nashville, stopping on the way at Lexington, which was the centre of a brilliant social life and of political influence in Kentucky.

Mr. Lyon assured him at the time that, on account of his delays, his chance for being elected to Congress from Tennessee was destroyed, and stated afterward on Burr's trial that there seemed much mystery in his conduct, and he suspected projects which he could not penetrate. Burr's arrival and stay in Nashville were the occasion of an ovation. He then came down the Cumberland river to Fort Massac, sixteen miles below its mouth on the Ohio. Here in June he met Wilkinson, who had come down from St. Louis expressly for the purpose of having this meeting with Burr, with whom he had had for several years a cipher correspondence. Wilkinson furnished him with an elegant barge, with sails and crew, and gave him a letter of introduction to Daniel Clark, a wealthy merchant of New Orleans,

* Wilk. Mem., II., p. 273.

and Burr went down the river.* In his note Wilkinson commended Burr as a persecuted man, who had a claim on his services, about whose business there were many things of which he could not write, and for which he referred him to Burr in person. In New Orleans Burr, on account of the eminent position he had held in the previous administration, was highly honored, dined with Governor Claiborne and other distinguished persons, and was shown many other attentions.

It is to be noted, in view of subsequent events, that Mr. Clark, to whom Mr. Burr had been specially commended, within two months of Burr's visit set out on a journey to Mexico, with regard to the objects and results of which journey he wrote after his return to Wilkinson: "I have been to the land of promise, and have got safe from it, after having been represented as a person desirous of acquiring information about its strength, and where and how it may be assailed with the greatest probability of success. At a future period I shall communicate to you all I have picked up there."†

Wilkinson declared‡ that his purpose of commending Burr to Clark was that, since the expectation of election in Tennessee was at an end, he now desired to promote Burr's election to Congress from Orleans, or his appointment as governor in place of Claiborne. In his memoirs he complained that while he was thus ingenuously promoting Colonel Burr's political aspirations, Burr had already, while keeping him in ignorance, made Clark his confederate in the scheme for invading Mexico, and had persuaded Clark that himself and the army were ready to unite in an expedition against that country. A letter written from New Orleans during Burr's visit asserts that the common rumor there was that a combination was forming, the object of which was to take Louisiana out of the Union.

After a stay of some weeks in New Orleans, Burr went to Natchez, and from thence to Nashville, Lexington, Louisville, and from thence in September, 1805, to St. Louis, where he made a visit to Wilkinson, and also went with him to St.

*Clark, p. 119. †Wilkinson, Mem. II. App. 73. ‡Wilkinson, II., p. 285.

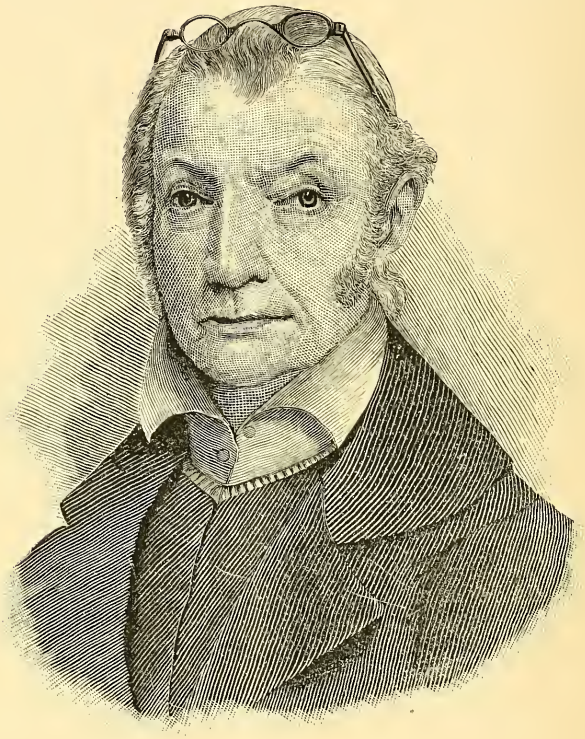
Charles. Before this, Major Seth Hunt stated that Wilkinson, on the twenty-eighth of June,* at Kaskaskia, in returning from his meeting with Burr at Fort Massac, declared to him that "he was engaged in a scheme full of danger, requiring enterprise; but, if successful, full of fortune and glory." †In the same year Wilkinson wrote to Colonel McKee, inquiring whether he could not raise a corps of cavalry "to follow his fortunes to Mexico."

At this time also, in June, and after his interview with Burr at Massac, Wilkinson assured General Adair, senator from Tennessee, that Burr reckoned on him in his project, and in a letter, marked "private," asks Adair to meet him, and he will tell him all, and that "they must have a peep at the unknown world beyond him."‡ Of the meaning of this allusion perhaps a hint may be had in the question contained in Adair's reply,§ "Pray, how far is it, and what kind of a way, from St. Louis to Santa Fé, and from thence to Mexico?" While Wilkinson protests that he knows nothing as yet of any confederacy, he declares his assurance that at this time Adair was connected with Burr's "sinister project."

As the result of his conversations during Burr's stay in St. Louis in September, 1805, Wilkinson states that he was persuaded that Burr had a scheme in hand, but that he did not know of its treasonable character, and that his confidence in Burr was shaken. In Burr's trial, subsequently, Wilkinson declared that in an interview in St. Louis, Burr stated that he had "a great project in contemplation, but whether it was authorized by the government or not Burr did not explain, nor did he inquire." The extreme unlikelihood of this statement is apparent. General Wilkinson and Colonel Burr had for years been corresponding intimately in cipher. Wilkinson was the commander-in-chief of the army, and would be in a position to know what projects were on foot by the government. He knew, moreover, that Burr was in utter antagonism to the President.

*Wilkinson II, p. 292–3. †Clark, 121. ‡Clark I., 120. §Wilkinson II., App. 77.

In September Burr left St. Louis for the east, and on the twenty-third was at Vincennes, where was General Harrison, the governor of the Northwestern territory, to whom Wilkinson had written a letter strongly commending Burr. Colonel Burr wrote back from there to Wilkinson, apparently about



AARON BURR.

the project which they had in common: "I have had no conversation on the subject you mentioned, but we have gone round about it, and there is every evidence of good will, in which I have entire belief. There is probably some secret embarrassment, of which you and I are ignorant."*

*Wilkinson, II, App. 82.

Burr went on to Philadelphia and Washington, between which places he remained until August, 1806. He had been indicted, in 1805, by the grand jury in New York for murder, in the matter of Hamilton, and this had been stated by General Adair as the cause of his going west. He had influential political adherents in New York and New Jersey, among whom were General Dayton, and the son of Matthew Ogden, of New Jersey, Samuel Swarwout and Marinus Willet, of New York. Among them he raised an amount of money for the purchase of a large tract of land on the Washita, a branch of the Red river, in the Louisiana country, the colonization of which was one of the alternative projects which he placed before his friends. Baron Bastrop had secured from Spain a concession of one million two hundred thousand acres of land. Mr. Lynch had bought from the baron six-tenths of this tract, the time for the completion of which purchase was drawing to its close. Colonel Burr, in July, 1806, contracted to purchase from Mr. Lynch the land, and was to pay fifty thousand dollars, and did pay down five thousand. Burr, for this purpose, raised among his friends forty thousand dollars, and more was forthcoming.

In the meantime he was writing frequently in cipher to Wilkinson, and Wilkinson replied. In April, 1806, he wrote to Wilkinson: "The execution of our project is postponed. Want of water in the Ohio rendered the movement impracticable. The association is enlarged, and comprises all that Wilkinson desires. Confidence limited to a few. Although this delay is irksome, it will enable us to move with more certainty and dignity. Burr will be throughout United States this summer."*

General Eaton, who had recently returned from operations against the pirates of Tripoli, and was supposed to have grievances against the government, because of its failure to reimburse him for advances made there, and who therefore might be supposed to be ready to entertain propositions adverse to the government, testified† in the trial of Burr that during the winter

*Wilkinson, II., App. 83. †Burr's trial, I., p. 536. Life of Eaton, p. 391.

of 1805–6, Burr informed him that he was forming a military expedition against the Spanish provinces to the southwest of the United States, and also had a project of revolutionizing the territory west of the Alleghany mountains, and establishing an independent empire there; New Orleans to be the capital, and himself the chief; gathering a military force on the waters of the Mississippi, and carrying conquest to Mexico. He said that he had in person made a tour through the western country during the previous season; that he had secured to his interests and attached to his person the most distinguished citizens of Tennessee, Kentucky, and the territory of Orleans; that he had inexhaustible resources and funds; that the army of the United States would act with him and be reinforced by ten or twelve thousand men from the above mentioned states and territories. He said that General Wilkinson would be the commander, and Burr offered Eaton the second place. He said that Wilkinson was doubtful about his retention of his present position and desired to secure a permanency with him, and would also use his influence with the army on the promise to it of double pay and rations, the ambition of the officers, and the prospect of plunder and military achievements. In addition to the positive assurances which Burr said he had of assistance and coöperation, he said that the vast extent of territory of the United States west of the Alleghany mountains would, with its offer to adventurers of the mines of Mexico, bring to his standard volunteers from all quarters of the Union. The line of separation of the Union was to be drawn by the Alleghanies. He was persuaded that he had secured the most considerable citizens of Kentucky and Tennessee, but expressed some doubts about Ohio, as he thought they were too much of a plodding, industrial people to engage in the enterprise.

Burr had three plans in mind,* and was incessantly moving about, putting forward one or the other projects, as he found persons more favorable to one or the other.

First. To organize the restlessness and discontent of the

*Amer. State Pap. Miscel. I., p. 468.

frontier states and territories, and to separate the southwest from the Union, and set up an independent government, with its capital in New Orleans.

Second. In conjunction with the first, to enlist recruits and make arrangements for an expedition against Mexico and the Spanish provinces, especially in the event of a war between Great Britain and Spain, which at that time seemed inevitable.

Third. In the event of the failure of both these projects, and as a means to commit to him and his measures irrevocably those who would revolt at such revolutionary plans as the foregoing, the purchase and colonization of the tract of land on the Washita river.

In deciding upon his course he was driven on by desperation and disappointed ambition. He gave too much credit to the declarations of a few partisan leaders who, in the desire to serve their own ends, overstated the restlessness of the western people. He made no proper estimate of the simple, law-abiding, republican habits of the great body of the inhabitants of the country. He deceived himself as to the conditional, really timid pledges of adherence on the part of a few men, which actually were wholly falsified in the event. And yet the brilliant audacity and versatility of Burr, in spite of his being almost alone in his planning, and of the popular odium and social isolation in which he was held, inspired and kept life in his scheme in spite of its desperation. As Wirt said afterward: "Pervading the continent from New York to New Orleans, he draws into his plan, by every allurement which he can contrive, men of all ranks and descriptions. To youthful ardor he presents danger and glory; to ambition, rank and titles and honors; to avarice, the mines of Mexico. To each person whom he addresses he presents the object adapted to his taste."*

On the fifteenth of April, 1806, Mr. Jefferson says† that, about a month before that time, Burr called on him and, reminding him that Jefferson had, some five years before, intimated his purpose to give him a high position if he had not

*Burr's Trial, II., p. 118. † Jefferson's Works, ix, 208.

been elected as Vice-President, told him that he was now disengaged, had supported his administration, could do him, if he chose, great harm, and was willing to receive from him a proposition. Jefferson says that he replied to him that he was sensible of his talents, but that he must be aware the public had withdrawn their confidence from him; and that as to any harm Burr could inflict, he feared no injury which Burr could do him.

In May, 1806, General Wilkinson was ordered, because of the threatening character of the relations with Spain, to send all his available force from St. Louis to Fort Adams, now Vicksburg. He did so, and then ordered them up the Red river to guard the western frontier of the United States* along the river Sabine. The order from the war department under which he acted simply contemplated the placing of his forces at Fort Adams, guarding New Orleans, and then from there maintaining observations eastward in Florida and westward on the Sabine river.† The transportation of all his troops to the remote point up the Red river was faulted at the time as placing his force out of reach in case of any attack on New Orleans by an expedition under Burr coming down the Mississippi river. Wilkinson stated before the grand jury afterward in Washington that, between the time of his meeting Burr at Massac and this time, he had received six notes from him in cipher, which he did not desire to have exposed except in the last extremity,‡ and that they were calculated to inculpate him should they be exposed. Wilkinson left St. Louis to join the troops down the Mississippi on the twenty-fifth of August, and reached Natchitoches, on the Red river, on the twenty-second of September.

Burr arrived at Blennerhassett's Island,§ on the Ohio river, on his way west, in September, 1806. Blennerhassett was an Irish gentleman, a barrister of literary and philosophical tastes, who had spent too much of his not large fortune in the purchase, eight years before, and adornment of an island on the

* Wilkinson II, App. 87 and 90.
†Jeff. Works, V, p. 25.
‡Clark, p. 117.
§ Blennerhassett Pap., p. 126.

Ohio, fourteen miles below Marietta. He now found himself wanting in ready means, and willing to embark in the southern venture, to which Burr had in general terms invited him, unconscious of all that it involved. A young family was growing up, in order to provide for whom he was ready to embark on the vague project in the Louisiana country which Burr, with his

HERMAN BLENNERHASSETT.

singular power of fascination, held up before him. They had corresponded, but had not personally met until this time, Blennerhassett having been absent when Burr stopped at the island in May of the previous year.

Burr imparted to his host, with some reserve, that the sentiments of the larger part of the inhabitants of the Orleans and

Mississippi territories were disaffected to the government to such an extent that, unless early measures were taken to prevent it, they would fling themselves into the arms of any foreign power which should pledge itself to protect them. He declared that, in such an event, the western states would be placed in a dilemma, out of which they could only escape by an eastern or western ascendancy of interests; they would no longer consent to an alliance, but would sever themselves from the Union. He said that the separation of the western from the Atlantic states was no new project, that it was a matter of daily discussion at Washington, and that so thoroughly disgusted were the people of New Orleans with the conduct of the administration—both with reference to themselves and to Spanish and American affairs—that he expected to hear of the beginning of a revolt in their seizing on the bank and custom house, and appropriating to themselves the revenues and forces of the territory. He declared that he had been invited, when he was in New Orleans, to become the leader of a society of young men there, who had taken possession of a number of cannon belonging to the French, for a Mexican invasion.

Blennerhassett was easily drawn into the project which Burr had in hand. In the month of September active preparations were begun for the contemplated expedition. Contracts were given out for the construction of fifteen large batteaux, sufficient to convey five hundred men, and a large keel boat for the transportation of provisions and arms, for the most of which Blennerhassett became responsible. While this work was going on, Burr visited Marietta, where his elegant manners, ready address and former political eminence made him very popular. He was asked to drill some troops. He visited Chillicothe, the seat of government in Ohio, and so passed on to Cincinnati, and then continued his journey to Lexington, Kentucky. He gave out that his expedition had the approval of the government. His object was to extend his acquaintance and enlist recruits. To these he promised pay, and land on the Washita.

He induced Blennerhassett to write for the *Ohio Gazette*,

published at Marietta, a series of essays, the design of which was to show the permanent antagonism between the commercial interests of the eastern and western states; that the land laws were invidious and unjust to western settlers; that the western people had paid the government more than four hundred thousand dollars a year, and had received nothing in return for it. On such considerations he based the conclusion that a separation of the eastern and western states was necessary, and that the western people should positively assert themselves. It is interesting to notice that, at this time, before the introduction of steam navigation, the writer remarks: "It will forever remain impracticable for our shipping to perform a return voyage against the currents of our long rivers." It was frequently found best then, in going from New Orleans to Cincinnati, instead of going up the river, to go around by sea to Baltimore, and then travel overland to the Ohio.

Burr, accompanied by his daughter, Theodosia, and her husband, Mr. Alston, with Blennerhassett, went in October to Lexington, which was designated as the point of rendezvous. The town was then a central point in the west, and society was the most polite and intelligent in the Mississippi valley. The oldest and best families in the south were represented there. The manner of the reception of Burr and his associates in Lexington, the respect shown, the generous hospitality extended, flattered him with the hope of the popularity of the movement, a thorough organization of which was immediately begun.* Burr received from friends in Lexington not less than forty thousand dollars for the furtherance of his projects. In order to quiet alarm, the impression was given out that the object of the enterprise was simply the colonization of the Bastrop lands. Burr had brought with him a portion of the money raised in the east. His son-in-law, Mr. Alston, had large property in South Carolina, but had no ready money; and so Blennerhassett had to join his personal credit with the security promised him on Alston's estate, in order to procure the means required.

* Blennerhassett Pap., p. 467.

In the meantime the preparations making had not escaped the attention of the government at Washington.* Mr. Madison, the secretary of state, directed Mr. John Graham, secretary of the Orleans territory, to ascertain and report the facts. He learned in Lexington that Mr. Burr reported that he had a credit of two hundred thousand dollars with Daniel Clark of New Orleans. He also warned the governor of Ohio of the treasonable designs of Burr and Blennerhassett within the borders of the state. Burr, leaving directions for the completion of the preparations, and for Blennerhassett to join him with his force at the mouth of the Cumberland, went down to the Falls of the Ohio. He had scarcely landed in Kentucky before Colonel Daviess, the district attorney, on the third of November, before the federal court, denounced the conspiracy, and moved for a warrant for the arrest of Burr for treasonable practice. Judge Innis, who, with Judge Sebastian, John Brown and General Wilkinson, had been during the summer denounced by the *Western World*, published in Frankfort, as intriguing with Spain, after two days overruled the motion.†

Burr appeared in court and, while declaring that the judge had treated the matter as it deserved, said that, as the motion might be renewed in his absence, he had challenged the district attorney to prove his charge. He retained Mr. Clay, then a young man, as one of his counsel. When the day of trial came, the attorney found that he could not procure his witnesses, and the grand jury returned the indictment "not a true bill," and completely exonerated him. The result greatly added to Burr's popularity in the state. Mr. Clay said that, before appearing for Burr, he called on him for a pledge that he was not unlawfully engaged, which he gave.‡ Mr. Clay afterward declared that Burr had lied. He met Burr for the first time after this in 1815, in the United States court room in New York, and Mr. Clay then declined to give Burr his hand, because of the deception which had been practised on him.§

* Blennerhassett Pap., p. 154.
† Allen, History Ky., p. 72.
‡ Butler, Kentucky, p. 315.
§ Prentice, Life of Clay, p. 34.

After the culmination of Burr's project, the Kentucky legislature instituted an inquiry into the allegation against Judge Sebastian, that he had been a pensioner of Spain for two thousand dollars a year; but he, to stifle the inquiry, resigned his office, but not before a committee had unanimously reported that for years he had been regularly receiving pay from Spain.

The authorities of Ohio moved vigorously in consequence of the information furnished them by Graham. The militia were called out, and pressed upon Blennerhassett and his men so closely that, while some of the boats were stopped and Blennerhassett arrested, the latter was forcibly released by his fellow conspirators, and he and his men in boats left the island and started down the Ohio at midnight of the tenth of December.

In order to lull suspicion and to add to his resources, Burr had been compelled in Washington and New Orleans to assume a double part. To the Marquis de Yrujo, the Spanish minister, he protested that his purpose was to divide the American Union. This was a measure highly agreeable to Spain. The transfer of Louisiana to the United States was always a hateful thing. Many of the Spaniards in Louisiana hoped that the separation was not final;* they thought that they would recover the territory after some struggle over the different interpretations of the articles of the treaty concerning boundaries. Our commerce on the Mobile and Tombigbee rivers was harassed by arbitrary duties and vexatious searches. The boundaries of Louisiana on the line of the Sabine were in dispute. The Choctaws in the Mississippi territory were incited to war with the United States. The former Spanish governor, Casa Calvo, and the Intendante stayed on in New Orleans and were the centre of cabals. They were told by Governor Claiborne, January 10, 1806, that they must leave the territory. In consequence they were greatly offended.† Yrujo therefore entered heartily into Burr's plans to divide the Union, and visited and advised with him. He offered him the use of ten thousand stand of arms, and money to any necessary amount.‡

* Gayarrè, S. D., p. 128. †Madison II., 398. ‡ Gayarrè Am. Dom., p. 181.

On the other hand, to Merry, the British minister to Washington, Burr represented that he was intending to proceed against Mexico, and as such a measure would be favorable to British interests, and would throw the United States into alliance with England as opposed to France and Spain, Burr declared that he had from Merry the pledge that the British fleet would come to the mouth of the Mississippi river to help him, and that Commodore Truxton had gone to Jamaica to communicate, on the part of Burr, with the British commander. Truxton did not leave Washington, however, in fact, but communicated to the President regularly all that Burr said to him.

On the eighth of October General Wilkinson was at Natchitoches. He had written to Burr in cipher on the thirteenth of May, asking from him a statement of his designs. On this day there came to him Mr. Swartwout, of New Jersey, with a letter of introduction to him from Burr, and another letter for Colonel Cushing, the second in command, from General Dayton. He said that he was on his way to New Orleans, and had expected to find the army at Fort Adams on the Mississippi, and offered his services as a volunteer. The next morning Wilkinson told Cushing that Swartwout had brought him intelligence of an enterprise that was on foot in the western states, inimical to the United States, in which a great number of persons, possessing wealth, popularity and talents, were engaged; that Colonel Burr was at the head of it; that he had been offered the second command, and that the army was reckoned on to support it. Wilkinson bound Cushing to secrecy about the project and his communication.

The following are the letters thus received, all in cipher, the first from Burr, and dated July 22:* "I have at length obtained funds and have actually commenced. The eastern detachments from different points, and under different pretenses, will rendezvous on the Ohio on the first of November. Everything internal and external favors our view—naval protection of England is secured. Truxton is going to Jamaica to arrange with

*Amer. State Pap. Miscel. I., p. 471. Wilkinson II, p. 312.

the admiral there, and will meet us at Mississippi. It will be a host of choice spirits. Wilkinson shall be second to Burr only, and Wilkinson shall dictate the rank and promotion of his officers. Burr will proceed westward August 1, never to return. Send forthwith an influential friend with whom Burr may confer; this is essential to concert and harmony of movement. Send a list of all persons known to Wilkinson, westward of the mountains, who could be useful, with a note delineating their character. Our project is brought to the point so long desired. Burr's plan is to move down rapidly from the falls (of the Ohio) on the fifteenth of November with the first five hundred or one thousand men in light boats, now constructing for that purpose, to be at Natchez between the fifth and fifteenth of December, there to meet you; then to determine whether to seize or pass by Baton Rouge. Send an answer; draw on me for all expense."

The next two letters delivered to Wilkinson were written by General Dayton, the close friend of Burr; the first on the sixteenth of July: "Everything appears to have conspired to prepare the train for a grand explosion; are you also ready? As you are said to have removed your headquarters down the river, you can retain your present position without suspicion, until your friends join you in December somewhere on the river Mississippi. Under the auspices of Burr and Wilkinson I shall be happy to engage, and when the time arrives you will find me near you." Eight days after this Dayton sought to bind Wilkinson fast to Burr's enterprise by intimating that he was in any event about to lose his position in the army. He wrote: "It is now well ascertained that you are to be displaced in next session. Jefferson will affect to yield reluctantly to the public sentiment, but yield he will; prepare yourself for it; you know the rest. You are not a man to despair, or even despond, especially when such prospects offer in another quarter. Are you ready? Wealth and glory. Louisiana and Mexico. Receive my nephew affectionately."

These letters came to Wilkinson on the eighth of October, but a little more than a month before the time named by Burr

when he said he would be at the Falls of the Ohio with his force coming down the river. Although it would seem as though time would be of great value, and that he would hastily return to the Mississippi and place Fort Adams and New Orleans in a condition for defence, for thirteen days Wilkinson did nothing but engage himself with the small force of Spaniards on the Sabine, and, as he says, endeavor to draw further facts out of Swartwout about the expedition.* His delay in communicating with the President had the more significance since he knew that the route of the messenger overland to Washington consumed over a month at best. The President wrote on the third of January, 1807, to Wilkinson, that his letter of November 12, brought by a special messenger, only reached him on the day before, having taken over fifty days in the transit.†

General Wilkinson, in his affidavit, No. 81, as reported to congress, swore that, having been requested by Swartwout to write to Burr, whom he was soon to meet, he declined to do so. It was, however, extorted from him afterwards in the examination in Richmond that he did write a letter to Burr from Natchitoches, that it was sent to Natchez, to which place he followed, recovered it and destroyed it.‡ This is probably the point at which, after long uncertainty, he at length determined to give up Burr and hold to the government. And even then he shaped his course in such a way that, if he discovered that Burr's project caught the popular favor and was likely to succeed, he might not be found to be committed irrevocably against it.

Only on the twenty-first of October did he send a message to the President; and even then he did not send the letters or copies of them which he had received; nor did he in a long communication mention the name of Burr as connected with the expedition. While the letter from Burr can hardly fail to convince one that Wilkinson was previously informed as to the conspiracy, Wilkinson, in his letter to the President, seems intent upon concealing the complicity of Burr. He declares

* Wilkinson II., p. 321. † Jefferson's Works, V, p. 26. ‡ Clark, p. 130.

in his memoirs, that even yet he could hardly bring himself to believe that his "long-loved friend," as he calls him, "could be engaged in a treasonable enterprise."*

On the fifth of November he received from Dr. Bollman, of New Orleans, a warm friend of Burr, copies of the letters of Burr and Dayton, which, for further certainty, had been commanded to be delivered to him. On the same day he received a letter from J. D. Donaldson, of Natchez, which informed him that a messenger from St. Louis had just made known to him a plan, with permission that he might inform the general of it, that, Wilkinson said, staggered credulity. It was that there was an expedition on foot to revolutionize the western country which was matured and ready to explode; that Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, Orleans and Indiana are combined to declare themselves independent on the fifteenth of November. It was added that an accredited agent of the conspiracy had approached some of the most influential persons in St. Louis and asked them to join, saying that if money was necessary it might be commanded to any extent. It was stated that the persons thus applied to altogether refused to concur in any such plan, and that it would be only superior force that would dispense with the oath of allegiance to the United States. The fact of the communication of this project in St. Louis was asserted; but, it was added, that there were only four persons in St. Louis privy to the disclosure made by the secret agent.†

It was, Wilkinson says, only on the receipt of this message that his mind, not even persuaded by what Swartwout had told him, and the letters brought him, was convinced that there was a conspiracy, and that Burr was at the head of it. It was only on the twelfth of November, more than a month after the receipt of the letters from Burr, that Wilkinson wrote to the President, sending a copy of the letters which he had received from Burr and Dayton. Even then he sent copies which were, as he himself afterwards confessed, garbled, with important changes made, and with all reference in them to

* II., p. 323. † Wilkinson, I., App. 88.

Burr's previous communications with him taken out. He says that this was done in order that he might not be inculpated with him. He at different times swore that one and the other forms of this important letter were faithful and correct. The fact that he was suspected was at all times present to his mind. When he revealed to Colonel Cushing the substance of Burr's letter, he bade him mark the date, in order that he might, if called on, make a statement afterward. Colonel Freeman, the commander in New Orleans, testified that Wilkinson put before him the rank and wealth which he might have if he would side with Burr. Governor Mead,* of Mississippi, wrote to Governor Claiborne, of Louisiana: "If Burr passes this territory with two thousand men, I have no doubt but that General Wilkinson will be your worst enemy. Be on your guard against the wily general. He is not much better than Cataline. Consider him as a traitor, and act as if certain thereof."† The messenger who took Wilkinson's letter of November 12, to the President affirmed that the first question which Jefferson put to him was: "Is Wilkinson sound in this business?"

The President, on his receipt of Wilkinson's first letter, as well as from information gained in other ways, issued his proclamation‡ against the conspiracy of Burr on November 27, 1806, in which he warned all persons from engaging in the treasonable expedition.

After Burr had secured his triumphal acquittal in Frankfort, about the middle of December, he went to Nashville to gather his recruits; but the proclamation of the President was now pressing hard upon him; and, while he had always overrated the number and zeal of his adherents, this evidence that those who joined him must be prepared to encounter the opposition of the government, paralyzed his work. The President afterward declared§ his judgment that the first blow which the enterprise received was from the energy of Governor Tiffin at Marietta, and that the plot was crippled by the activity of Ohio.

*Cable, Creoles of Lou., p. 153.
†Gayarré, Am. Dom. p. 169.
‡Wilkinson, I., App., 96.
§Jefferson's Works, V., p. 28.

Burr went down the Cumberland river with only two boats, although he expected a force to come overland from Tennessee, and meet him on the Mississippi near Natchez. Burr knew thoroughly the condition of the road from Nashville to Bayou Pierre, the point on the Mississippi near Natchez, where the force was to rendezvous. On the twenty-seventh of December Burr joined Blennerhassett,* who had nine boats, at the mouth of the Cumberland; and they all proceeded down the Mississippi. Six days after they came to Chickasaw Bluffs, where was Lieutenant Jackson with a detachment of United States troops. Burr strove to induce him to join them, putting before him in strong colors what brilliant results would follow for those who survived, and while he did not state fully what his plans were, he assured him that they were honorable. Jackson, however, was firm in refusing. The situation for Burr had now become desperate. Those who had pledged to him their adherence altogether withdrew on the appearance of the President's proclamation, which showed the lawlessness of the undertaking. All the western states called out their militia, and the most rigid measures were taken all along the Mississippi to quell the expedition. Burr saw that he must destroy all the military features of his enterprise, and declare that it was only intended as a colonizing party for the Washita country. Accordingly one night he ordered all the chests of arms to be thrown into the Mississippi river.

Burr landed at Bayou Pierre, thirty miles above Natchez, in the Mississippi territory, on the seventh of January, 1807. On the seventeenth he surrendered himself to Cowles Mead, the acting governor,† only declaring his wish not to fall into the hands of Wilkinson, whom he called a perfidious villain, and said that if he was sacrificed his portfolio would prove him to be a villain. When the case of Burr was given into the hands of the grand jury, they declared that there was no evidence against him, and, pending his request to be released on his own recognizance, and hearing that instantly upon his release he was to

* Blennerhassett Pap., 186, † Wilkinson, II., 337.

be arrested again by the governor, he changed his clothes and escaped across the country eastward. His company, in the meantime, were in great confusion, and with no money. The leaders were arrested by the United States authorities, and the others scattered, and went back home.

In the meantime Wilkinson, aroused at last from his indecision, seemed determined by a frenzied, histrionic* activity against Burr to conceal his previous complicity. He reached New Orleans on the twenty-fifth of November ordering Fort Adams to be dismantled, which should have been rather strengthened, if, as he declared to the President, seven thousand men were coming down the river with Burr. He made requisition on Governor Mead for his militia, in order to take them to New Orleans. This, however was refused on the reasonable ground that it would strip the country of all means of resistance. He arbitrarily arrested in New Orleans those whom he suspected of complicity with Burr, some of whom could give very damaging evidence against himself; and with the force of the army resisted the process of the courts for their release under the *habeas corpus* act.

Burr subsequently declared that he never had any idea of dividing the Union, that his hopes of prospering in his expedition against Mexico had depended upon war being declared between Great Britain and Spain, that this expedition was defeated by the death of Pitt early in 1806, and that Wilkinson thereupon lost heart in the project. Wilkinson confessed, however, that in October he said to Swartwout he would not oppose Burr's expedition.†

Burr was reärrested on the seventeenth of February, 1807, in northern Alabama, traveling with a companion, under an assumed name, endeavoring to make his way to Pensacola, then under the king of Spain. He was charged with high misdemeanor, in setting on foot within the United States a military expedition against Spain, a friendly power; and also with treason, in assembling an armed force, with design to seize New Orleans,

* Cable, Creoles of Lou., p. 153. Eaton, p. 403. †Clark, p. 163.

to revolutionize the territory attached, and separate the western from the Atlantic states. It was with great difficulty that Burr could be taken through the country as a prisoner. He appealed to the civil authorities against his military arrest. The ladies everywhere espoused his cause, and children were named after him.*

At length Burr reached Richmond, Virginia, where, under Chief Justice Marshall, his trial began on the seventeenth of August. There was a brilliant array of counsel on each side. Political feeling ran at that time very high, and the greatest excitement prevailed in Richmond and in Washington over the progress and results of the trial. The President was a Republican, and was bitterly opposed to Burr. The Chief Justice was more of a Federalist, and was scrupulously exact and, some thought, almost timid, in his rulings. The President wrote at the time to a friend: "The Federalists make Burr's cause their own and exert their whole influence to shield him from punishment. It is unfortunate that federalism is still predominant in our judiciary department, which is consequently in opposition to the legislative and executive branches, and is able to baffle their measures often."†

Testimony was received touching Burr's conversations, showing his intent before overt acts began. In addition to the evidence given by General Eaton, which has been already referred to, Colonel Morgan and his son testified that in August, 1806, Colonel Burr had, at their house in western Pennsylvania, declared that, in less than five years, the west would be totally divided from the Atlantic states, and that the Alleghany mountains would be the line of division. He said that great numbers were not necessary to execute great military deeds; all that was wanted was a leader in whom they could place confidence, and who, they believed, would carry them through. He averred that, with two hundred men, he could drive congress, with the President at its head, into the river Potomac, and that, with five hundred men, he could take possession of New York.‡

*Pickett's His. Alabama, *ad loc.* † Jefferson's Works, V, 165. ‡Burr's Trial, I, p. 566.

Evidence was also received concerning the transactions on Blennerhassett's Island, which, however, took on an unmistakably warlike character only after Burr had left. Long arguments were heard as to the competency of other evidence which was offered. At length the court ruled * that no testimony relative to the conduct and declarations of the prisoner elsewhere and subsequent to the transactions on Blennerhassett's Island could be admitted, because such testimony, being in its nature corroborative, and incompetent to prove the overt act in itself, was irrelevant until there was proof had of the overt act by two witnesses; that the overt act on Blennerhassett's Island was proved, but the presence of the accused was not alleged; that his presence when and where the overt act was committed was necessary. In consequence of this ruling, the jury, on September the first, 1807, found that Burr was not proved guilty of treason, under the indictment, by any evidence submitted to them.

In the trial for misdemeanor, Burr was, on the fifteenth of September, discharged, because the evidence sustaining it was, under the former ruling of the court, excluded. It was also ruled † (1) that the declaration of three persons, not forming a part of the transaction, and not made in the presence of the accused, is not to be received; (2) that acts of accomplices, except so far as they prove the character and object of the expedition, cannot be taken in evidence; (3) that acts of accomplices in another district, even though they constitute substantial cause for a prosecution, cannot be taken in evidence unless they go directly to prove the charges made in this district; (4) that legal testimony to show that the expedition was military, and destined against Spain, is to be received.

Burr was accordingly remanded for trial to Ohio, where the offense was said to have been committed; but no further proceedings against him were had. Indignation was very widely expressed at the result of the trial. The President himself wrote thus to General Wilkinson ‡ about the failure to convict

*Burr's Trial, I, 549. †Burr's Trial (Robertson), I, 539. ‡Jefferson's Works, V., 198.

Burr: "The scenes which have been enacted at Richmond are such as have never before been exhibited in any country where all regard to public character has not yet been thrown off. They are equivalent to a proclamation of impunity to every traitorous combination which may be formed to destroy the Union. However, they will produce an amendment to the constitution which, keeping the judges independent of the Executive, will not leave them so of the nation." Burr went abroad directly after the trial.

The case of Blennerhassett, which was really determined by the result of Burr's trial, was remanded to Ohio, but no further prosecution followed. He was distressed by the losses which he had brought on himself by his adherence to Burr. He became, however, completely disillusioned as to Burr's perfidy and sensuality in the closer intimacy which he had with him during the trial in Richmond. Although both Burr and his son-in-law, Alston, had promised to make good the advances which he had made, they neither of them did so, although Blennerhassett, in the loss of his home and in his utter need otherwise, begged them for a repayment of what he had sacrificed for Burr. In consequence he suffered from poverty to the end of his life. His son, Joseph Lewis Blennerhassett, was engaged in the practice of the law, and died in Lincoln county, Missouri, in 1862.

Wilkinson, in the trial of Burr, of course gave only so much evidence against him as his hatred of Burr drew forth, and as would conceal his own complicity. He was true to his craven instincts to the last. Immediately after the conclusion of the trial in Richmond he sent his confidential agent, Walter Burling, into Mexico, as he declared, "on grounds of public duty and professional enterprise, to attempt to penetrate the veil which concealed the topographical route to the City of Mexico, and the military defenses which intervened, feeling that the equivocal relations of the two countries justified the *ruse*."* Burling was really sent to apprise the viceroy of the attempt of Burr,

*Wilkinson I., p. 417.

and to demand, on Wilkinson's behalf, a compensation of two hundred thousand dollars for, as he declared, "great pecuniary sacrifices in defeating Burr's plan, and, Leonidas-like, throwing himself into the pass of Thermopylæ." Yturrigaray, the viceroy, received the communication with indignation, and told Burling that General Wilkinson in counteracting any treasonable plan of Burr's did no more than comply with his duty, that he would take good care to defend the kingdom of Mexico against any attack or invasion, and that he did not think himself authorized to give one farthing to General Wilkinson in compensation for his pretended services. The demand having been contemptuously refused, Burling was ordered to leave the country.*

Thus ended the last attempt at separating the western country from the American Union. As all such attempts had their strength in the distance and isolation, and consequently the ignorance and prejudice of the sections, it may be confidently believed that in the comparative homogeneity of the affections and interests of all the people of the land now, by reason of rapid and constant communication, no such attempts will again be made, or, if made, will gain even the limited standing and proportions which those in the past have done.

Our multiplying railroad bars and telegraph wires are more than material lines of communication. Themselves created by the physical and commercial needs of a great people, they are the sensitive nerve connections of a complex social organism. Along them pulse the currents of intelligence and an identical interest, and they convey and perpetuate the throbbings of simultaneous impulses and common national aspirations. In these are furnished, under God, the sure hope and presage of the perpetuity of our American Union.

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*Davis, Burr, II., pp. 401-4. Blennerhassett Pap., pp. 210 and 578.

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